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1991 Annual Report of the Missouri State Park Advisory Board



FRONT COVER: *Scott Joplin House State Historic Site in St. Louis was dedicated October, 1991.*

1991 Annual Report of the Missouri State Park Advisory Board

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Lebanon

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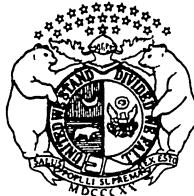
Len Pagano
St. Peters

John Ashcroft, *Governor*

G. Tracy Mehan III, *Director*
Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Wayne E. Gross, *Director*
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

JOHN ASHCROFT
Governor



G. TRACY MEHAN III
Director

STATE OF MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF PARKS, RECREATION, AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
P.O. Box 176 Jefferson City, MO 65102 314-751-2479

April 10, 1992

The Honorable John Ashcroft
Governor of Missouri
State Capitol
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Governor Ashcroft:

I am pleased to transmit to you the 1991 Annual Report of the Missouri State Park Advisory Board. This report, prepared pursuant to Executive Order 86-26, summarizes the major accomplishments that occurred in the Missouri State Park System during calendar year 1991 and lists recommendations for future actions to be taken.

State park governance was one issue of major concern last year. The State Park Advisory Board voted to maintain its advisory capacity and a memorandum of understanding is being developed to clearly define the roles of the State Park Advisory Board and the Division of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

During 1991, seven meetings were held throughout the state to gain public comment on a proposed plan to guide the future expansion of the state park system. These meetings resulted in significant input to this planning process.

Another important issue facing the park system is responding to the results of a recently completed study on threats to the resources of the parks. This study identified over 1,500 threats to the natural and cultural resources found within the park system. Implementing the recommendations of this report will be a significant challenge for the Department of Natural Resources.

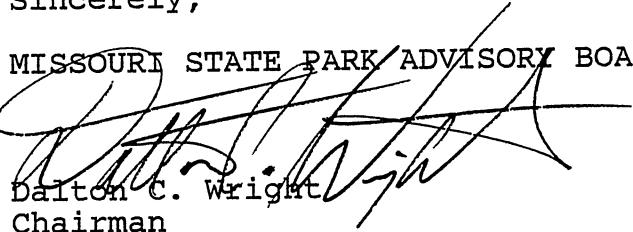


The Honorable John Ashcroft
April 10, 1992
Page two

The Missouri state park system has a long and proud tradition of providing outstanding public service. Your continued interest and support of these efforts are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

MISSOURI STATE PARK ADVISORY BOARD


Dalton C. Wright
Chairman

c Members, Missouri General Assembly

MISSOURI STATE PARK ADVISORY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

While the Missouri state park system contributes greatly to the economy of Missouri, the financial resources available to the system are limited to the fees that are collected from users and the proceeds from the earmarked parks-and-soils sales tax. On an annual basis, the system can depend upon about \$3.1 million from fees and \$24.6 million from the tax for its operations, development, and expansion.

Approximately two-thirds of the available funds go into the day-to-day operations of the state park system. The balance is applied toward repair, improvement, and expansion of the state park system. Of these nonoperating funds, 52 percent go toward upkeep of facilities; 43 percent toward the construction of new services, and 5 percent to expand the land base of the state park system. Programs that have received emphasis for funding in the past are those involving campgrounds, roads, visitor centers, picnicking, and utilities systems.

Revenue from the sales tax has been used to help renovate many of the facilities developed for visitors. Overuse, however, requires that new ways be found to "harden" the parks in order to avoid further resource degradation. What were once trails and short climbs up a hillside must now be converted to boardwalks and staircases such as those recently constructed at Ha Ha Tonka State Park. Increased use has brought about more demands on the support systems that are set up to protect the environment. Today, sophisticated public drinking water systems and wastewater treatment systems are a part of almost all parks and historic sites.

It was once possible to provide individual service and orientation to park visitors at a small park office or amphitheater. Now it is necessary to provide such services at focal points called visitor centers. With such an approach, the visitor can learn more about the fragile resource they are about to visit or the history behind a battlefield from ages past. The visitor gets more from their visit and the resource receives less pressure and more protection because it is better understood.

In the last six years, only four new units have been added to the state park system--the Katy Trail State Park, Nathan Boone Homestead State Historic Site (undeveloped), Taum Sauk Mountain State Park (undeveloped) and the Battle of Carthage State Historic Site.

As man changes Missouri's environment, state parks become more valuable as examples of landscapes first seen by early explorers. Golden tallgrass prairies, oak-hickory forests, desertlike glades, and open savannas are scattered across Missouri in state parks, waiting to share their wonders with curious visitors.

As natural processes have been controlled, the result has been a reduction in plant and animal diversity and population imbalances. Land is often overused beyond its carrying capacity in order to meet the demands of more users. Every day, new demands are placed on the park system. Having recognized these problems and that park resources are island remnants of what the nation's natural resource once were, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources has established management practices that reproduce natural processes. Early indications are that the resources respond rapidly and positively to such efforts.

As the pendulum of a clock moves on through time, today's problems must be changed into challenges for the future. The managers and users of Missouri's state park system must recognize that they are dealing with a dwindling resource, that tremendous demands are being placed upon it, and that the resources of time and money are shrinking as well. The department must face the challenge of educating the public as to its role in dealing with state park/historic site resources, to establish controls that sustain and protect them for future generations and secure long-term monetary resources to operate and manage the system.

TAUM SAUK MOUNTAIN

During September 1991, an area of rugged wilderness in the St. Francois Mountains was designated Missouri's newest state park.

Taum Sauk Mountain State Park covers 6,025 acres in Iron and Reynolds counties, and includes Missouri's highest point, Taum Sauk Mountain (1,772 feet), and Mina Sauk Falls, the state's highest waterfall at 132 feet.

The area was originally acquired as a expansion of Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park. However, the significant natural features of the area, including Taum Sauk Mountain and Mina Sauk Falls, warranted designation as a separate state park. As a distinct entity, Taum Sauk Mountain State Park will provide visitors with a name recognition that better identifies the unique and outstanding features of the Taum Sauk Valley.

The new state park adjoins the 2,490-acre Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park in Reynolds County. Park visitors will be able to hike from the top of Taum Sauk Mountain to the shut-ins area.

The Department of Natural Resources acquired 4,725 acres for the park through purchases in 1990 and 1991 and acquired another 1,300 acres under a lease from Union Electric.

The initial phase of development of the park will begin this year. The first phase of development, expected to be completed by October 1992, will include picnic facilities, a primitive camping area, roads, and parking, water lines, restroom facilities, and trails to Mina Sauk Falls and the top of Taum Sauk Mountain; future development will include a lookout tower.

The benefits of the new park are manifold. This new park preserves one of Missouri's most rugged and scenic landscapes, ensuring that these very important natural resources will be enjoyed by future generations. In addition, there will be a positive economic impact on the surrounding area as the result of park development and the influx of park visitors. It is anticipated that 44 new jobs will be created in Iron and Reynolds counties, carrying an annual economic benefit of \$1.3 million.

KATY TRAIL STATE PARK

For nearly three years the 200-mile-long Katy Trail State Park proposal remained in legal limbo while a lawsuit brought by adjacent landowners of the trail worked its way through the federal court system. The former KATY (or Missouri-Kansas-Texas) Railroad corridor became available for conversion into a recreational trail under the provisions of the National Trails System Act, which allowed the banking of unused railroad rights-of-way for future needs, while making them available in the interim for development into recreational trails.

The landowners contended that rail banking was an unconstitutional taking without just compensation for land that would have otherwise reverted to them in accordance with state laws. The high court unanimously ruled in February 1990 that rail banking was a valid exercise of the powers granted the U.S. Congress under the commerce clause of the constitution, and directed those landowners who felt entitled to compensation to take their claims to U.S. Claims Court. This opened the door for development of the pilot sections of the trail to proceed, once funding became available. Ted Jones, a retired stock broker, provided \$2,000,000 for surfacing and bridge decking material to begin development of the trail.

On Saturday, April 28, 1990, Gov. John Ashcroft and Department of Natural Resources Director Tracy Mehan were among the dignitaries present for the formal dedication of a five-mile segment of the Katy Trail State Park between Rocheport and Huntsdale, Missouri. By the end of May of that year, the trail was extended to McBaine for a total of 10 of the 35 miles of the western pilot section. Twenty-six miles of the eastern pilot section was developed and opened for public use in October 1990. An additional four miles of the western pilot section was opened near Jefferson City in December. Both western and eastern pilot sections were completed by August 1991.

Gov. John Ashcroft announced June 14, 1991, that construction of the remaining 123 miles of the Katy Trail State Park would proceed. The decision was based upon a study by the University of Missouri, which surveyed the success of 67 miles of the trail pilot project. When completed in 1994, the trail will stretch two-thirds of the way across the state from St. Charles to Sedalia. It will be the longest rail-to-trail conversion in the nation.

A cautious approach was originally taken to the trail development to ensure that a first class trail could be maintained without causing problems for adjoining landowners. In just over a year of operation, more than 100,000 people have hiked and biked on the trail. The University of Missouri survey indicated that an increasing number of adjoining landowners noticed little or no change in the occurrence of trespassing, littering, theft, or vandalism on their property. The trail was responsible for new economic development opportunities. The trail sparked 15 new businesses in communities along the trail and has been responsible for the expansion of many others.

In the last days of 1990, Union Pacific Railroad donated an additional 33 miles of right-of-way to the Department of Natural Resources. This new section will connect Sedalia with Clinton. At the close of the 1991 construction season, 89 miles was open to public use, from St. Charles to Marthasville in the east, and from Jefferson City to Boonville in the west. An appropriation secured in 1991 joined the Department of Highway and Transportation and the city of Boonville in funding construction of a walkway on the planned new bridge across the Missouri River at Boonville

NATHAN BOONE HOMESTEAD ACQUISITION

The log cabin home and burial site of one of Missouri's foremost early citizens, Nathan Boone, was acquired August 15, 1991 and will be developed as a state historic site. The home, which is located two miles north of Ash Grove, is surrounded by 371 acres.

Nathan Boone and his brother, Daniel Morgan Boone, are the sons of Daniel Boone, and were instrumental in the development of Missouri during the early 1800s. Col. Nathan Boone surveyed many trails through Missouri, served as a much-respected officer in the army, was a member of the first state constitutional convention in 1820, and eventually settled in Ash Grove in the late 1830s as one of the first settlers of Greene County.

The one and one-half story log house was built in 1837 and is one of the earliest structures constructed in southwest Missouri by settlers. The log house reflects many of the features associated with early Missouri log cabins built by settlers from Kentucky and Virginia. The house rests on a stone foundation and has a large chimney of locally quarried stone at each end of the house to serve the fireplaces. Two rooms on the first floor flank a central hallway; a stairway at the rear of the hall leads to the second floor loft.

In addition to the house, the property contains a cemetery near the home where Nathan Boone and his wife Olive are buried. The development and management of the Nathan Boone home as a state historic site will focus on archaeological investigation, renovation of the house and cemetery, and the interpretation of the historical significance of Nathan Boone and this property. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the nation's premier listing of historic properties and districts.

SCOTT JOPLIN HOUSE OPENS TO THE PUBLIC

"Maybe 50 years after I'm dead my music will be appreciated," said ragtime composer and pianist Scott Joplin. Indeed, his music has been appreciated, and on Oct. 5, 1991 the Department of Natural Resources celebrated the grand opening of the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site in St. Louis.

The newly married Scott Joplin and his wife moved into this flat in 1901 at 2658A Morgan Street, now known as Delmar Boulevard. While there, some of Joplin's most widely known compositions were published. The second-floor apartment where he resided will be an authentic representation of what it looked like when Joplin lived there.

In the future, visitors will be able to hear ragtime live. The building next door, the Rosebud Club, which was a favorite spot for turn-of-the-century ragtime players, will be reconstructed. It is hoped that other buildings can be stabilized around the house and that developers will take an interest in generating a cultural district in the area.

CROWDER EXPANSION

The acquisition of 985 acres at Crowder State Park near Trenton added one of the few remaining large forest tracts in northwest Missouri to the park, as well as one of the oldest brick homes in that part of the state. The bottomland forest along the picturesque Thompson River added many new recreational opportunities to Crowder State Park. This large wooded area, which is no longer common in northwest Missouri, is well-suited for hiking, photography, bird watching, and other activities.

In addition to the bottomland forest, the Crowder expansion included the historic Thompson House, a two-story brick home built by Dr. William Preston Thompson in 1834. The house, the first brick home built in Grundy County, is well-known as a local landmark.

The acquisition more than doubles the size of Crowder State Park from 673 acres to 1,731 acres.

PRAIRIE EXPANSION

The state legislature failed to provide requested 1991 appropriations to acquire and protect the few remaining native prairie remnants contiguous with the ecosystem that is Prairie State Park. However, funding from a private citizen helped to fulfill the mission of preserving the best examples of Missouri's natural history by saving an area of a rapidly vanishing ecosystem. The benefactor, who chose to remain anonymous, provided funding for approximately 150 acres to be added to Prairie State Park. The donated area included 117 acres of virgin native prairie grasses.

In October, an outbreak of brucellosis forced the removal of the herd of 38 bison. The herd was sent to Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, for research on bison brucellosis.

Brucellosis is a contagious bacterial infection that causes cows to abort their young or give birth to weak calves. Testing was done as part of an annual brucellosis testing program, which confirmed that 26 animals had contracted the disease sometime during the past year.

The bison will be restocked as soon as replacement animals are located. In the future, plans are to reintroduced elk to the prairie. The prairie served as home to great herds of elk some 200 years ago.

RECORD ATTENDANCE

In spite of, or possibly because of, the sluggish economy, visitation to Missouri state parks and historic sites reached an all time high of 15,500,700 visitors during 1991. This total represented a 9 percent increase in attendance and number of camping units sold. A 2 percent increase in motel and cabin rentals also was noted.

The most popular areas to visit were Bennett Spring State Park, Lake of the Ozarks State Park, Meramec State Park, Roaring River State Park, St. Joe State Park, Table Rock State Park, Thousand Hills State Park, Harry S Truman State Park, Washington State Park, and Watkins Mill State Park. Each of these parks had more than 500,000 visitors each with Bennett Spring State Park receiving the highest visitation--871,107 visitors, which represented a 3 percent increase in visitation to that park. The popularity of the Katy Trail State Park is ever increasing, as new sections are completed, recording 129,762 visitors this year, an increase of 106 percent.

STATE PARK FUNDING

Some assumptions have been made regarding the various funds--parks-and-soils sales tax, earnings, Babler, Meramec/Onondaga and general revenue--which support the division.

Parks and Soils Sales Tax Fund - It is projected that new revenues will grow annually at a rate of 4.3 percent. About 70 percent of each year's fund will draw interest at a rate of 6 percent. Five percent of the expected annual revenues will be held in reserve. The operating budget will make use of these funds on a projected growth rate of 3 percent per year. Balance of these funds after operations will be available for capital improvements.

State Park Earnings Fund - A growth rate of 5 percent is expected annually. No interest will be returned to the fund but \$300,000 will be held in reserve. The operating budget will make use of these funds on an increasing level of growth at a rate of 3 percent per year. Balance of these funds after operations will be available for capital improvements.

Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park Fund - A growth pattern of 5 percent is expected annually. About 80 percent of the fund balance will draw interest at a rate of 6 percent. No more than 7.5 percent of the corpus plus any new revenues and interest will be spent in any one year. Expenditures from the fund will be no more than the law allows in the operating budget. None of these funds will be used in capital improvements.

Meramec/Onondaga Funds - There are no new revenues other than interest to enter these funds. Interest will be earned at a rate of 6-7 percent of the balance on hand. No more than 7.5 percent of the corpus plus interest will be spent. No plans have been made for the use of these funds.

General Revenue - No expanded use of this fund is anticipated or planned and it is assumed that the division will maintain its current level in annual appropriations. The division will continue to use this in operations for none of the park programs are involved with federal grants.

STATE PARK GOVERNANCE

A letter sent to the Missouri State Park Advisory Board by Sen. Roger Wilson, chairman of the Senate appropriations committee, and Rep. Al Nilges, chairman of the House budget committee, initiated a discussion about the possible restructuring of the park system. Sen. Wilson expressed concern that he was not able to obtain pertinent information from the department or a procedure for land acquisitions. Sen. Wilson also questioned the amount of input the State Park Advisory Board had on issues. Rep. Nilges expressed the need for improved communications and the need for a long range park system plan.

A meeting was held Sept. 10, 1991, to solicit comments concerning these issues. Statements were given by John Karel, president of the Missouri Parks Association, Dave Oslund, executive director, Missouri Parks and Recreation Association; Charlie Callison, Missouri Parks Association; and Becky Rawlings, Sierra Club.

Dr. Susan Flader, founding president of the Missouri Parks Association, has done extensive research into the history of the park system and summarized the issue by stating that "there have been several different governmental structures for parks since their creation and that she has come to the conclusion that there is no organizational structure that was demonstratively better than any other."

The board voted 5-0 to leave the Division of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation as a part of the Department of Natural Resources. The board also voted 4-1 to maintain its advisory capacity and, in the same action, voted that a memorandum of understanding should be developed to clearly define the roles of the board and the Division of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

THREATS STUDY

The results of a four-year study identifying 1,552 threats to Missouri's 77 state parks and historic sites were released in October 1991. Numerous recommendations designed to give greater focus to the preservation of natural and cultural resources within the state park system also were outlined.

The study defined a threat as any activity or process that is or could possibly diminish biological, geological, hydrological, scenic, archaeological, or cultural values. Threats to these values interfere with the department's mission of preserving Missouri's natural and cultural features in a systematic manner while providing recreational opportunities consistent with that preservation mandate.

Each of the 77 parks and historic sites in the system reported at least one threat. The average number of threats reported per park or historic site was 21; Lake of the Ozarks State Park led the list with 73 reported threats.

An analysis of the threats revealed that most of the threats could be grouped into eight major categories. These include the following:

Aesthetic degradation - the loss of park scenery

Visitor physical impact - the results of overuse

Ecosystem degradation - man-made interruptions of naturally occurring processes that otherwise reduce natural landscape diversity and species richness

Park operations - impacts from the department's own operations

Physical loss of resources - for example, loss of soil or historic materials

Air pollution problems

Water quality problems and

Exotic encroachment - the invasion of alien plants and animals, or noises such as sonic booms

The report also outlined eight recommendations designed to help preserve state parks and historic sites and to reduce damages caused by the threats. The recommendations included the following:

- 1) The establishment of an interdepartmental Parks Threats Action Committee consisting of members of Division of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, as well as the Divisions of Environmental Quality, Energy, and Geology and Land Survey. The committee would recommend actions to help protect state parks and historic sites.
- 2) Seeking appropriate land acquisitions to help protect parks from uncontrolled or improper development.
- 3) Strengthen the department's science, resource management, and cultural resources programs by identifying and reallocating expertise within the department.
- 4) Establish resource management goals for each unit of the park system.
- 5) Advise park managers as to the needs of resource management.
- 6) Shift funding priorities to address resource issues.
- 7) Inform park constituency groups as to the health of the park system and what they can do to improve it.
- 8) Establish a dependable and adequate source of funding so that the protection of state park and historic site resources can continue for future generations.

EXPANSION PLAN

The proposed state park expansion plan detailed the criteria used to identify gaps in the current state park and historic site system. Seven meetings were held throughout the state during November and December 1991--Cape Girardeau, Columbia, Independence, Kirksville, Maplewood, Springfield, and St. Joseph. Citizens were encouraged to attend a meeting and comment on the plan.

The criteria generally stated that a proposed area must be of statewide significance, be of high quality, and be able to fulfill at least one aspect of the state park system mission. The state park mission is to preserve and interpret the state's most outstanding natural landscapes and cultural landmarks, and to provide healthy and enjoyable outdoor recreational opportunities.

A proposed natural resource (park) must be a site of high integrity that contains a principle natural feature or distinctive characteristic of a natural region. It should be of sufficient acreage that the feature or ecosystem can be maintained in high quality. It should fill a gap in the existing system of state natural resource ownership.

A proposed cultural resource must be a site that has statewide significance in the history of our state or nation. The area should represent either an event, person, object, a period or process, or would yield important information relative to earlier civilizations. It should fill a gap in the existing system of state cultural resource ownership in chronology, historic theme or geography.

A proposed recreational resource must be a site that contains scenic, natural, or cultural resource qualities that allow opportunities for outdoor recreation. The area must be of sufficient size to adequately protect the physical resource qualities that make the area appealing. It should fill a gap in the existing system of state recreational resource ownership in the area of statewide recreation demand, or resource based recreation.

Recorded comments from the series of public meetings and from written statements are being compiled. A final version of the plan is expected in early 1992, which will incorporate public comment.

PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT).

In September 1991, the State Park Advisory Board was informed by the Director of the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Management Services that a position paper on payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) would be submitted with the FY 93 budget. This action was the result of the Department of Conservation making such payments on lands, and it became an issue for the Department of Natural Resources in the past several years when the department proposed large acquisitions. A motion was made and seconded that an Attorney General's opinion be requested on the legality of such payments. The State Park Advisory Board went on record as opposing any payment in lieu of taxes of any kind. The motion carried with four in favor and one opposed.

